

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Fiscal Year 2008

The Design Review Board held 10 meetings during FY 08. This was the same number of meetings as in FY 07, but was down somewhat from previous years. This downturn was due to both a slow-down in the overall number of downtown private development projects being proposed and the fact that the Board was at low strength (2 or 3 members out of an intended total of five) throughout the fiscal year. At times the Board had difficulty in achieving a quorum.

Public Projects Reviewed

Pomeroy Village Streetscape – the Board continued its discussions and review of the intersection of Pomeroy Lane and Route 116. Board members met with representatives of the Public Transportation & Bicycle Committee to discuss the need for a manual control for the traffic lights and locations of curb cuts to facilitate pedestrian crossing at the intersection of the two roads. The Board also met with the Town Engineer for a presentation about the design plans that have been developed by the Department of Public Works to improve the roadway and sidewalks in the area. Board members will continue to meet and discuss these issues, and plan to hold a series of further public meetings to collect input from business owners and residents in the area regarding strategies for encouraging the intersection's development as a Village Center, for connecting it to the South Amherst Common and for improving the pedestrian experience both within the intersection and between the Village Center and the Common.

Downtown Streetscape Improvements (Ren's Mobil Station. to Carriage Shops and D'Angelo's Building to St. Brigid's Church) – The DRB reviewed and approved designs for streetscape improvements for these stretches of downtown sidewalk.

Atkins Corner Intersection Realignment – In a meeting with the Town Engineer, the DRB reviewed 25% designs for realigning the intersections of Bay Road and West Bay Road with West Street (Rte. 116).

250th Anniversary Committee – The Board reviewed a proposal for a public art installation at the former site of the Amherst Academy on Amity Street with members of the 250th Anniversary Committee. Board members recommended approval of the "spirit frame" and made further recommendations regarding its proposed location and immediate surroundings.

Design Review Overlay Districts – The Board discussed and advised on a proposal by the Planning Board to add Design Review (DR) and Town Common Design Review (TCDR) Overlay Districts to the Official Zoning Map. This proposal was later approved by Town Meeting.

Private (Downtown) Projects Reviewed

The redevelopment and improvement of downtown buildings and sites continued. The following projects and signs were reviewed in FY 08:

Projects – Amherst College’s renovations and additions to Hitchcock House dormitory; La Piazza Ristorante’s new awnings and seasonal outdoor dining area including outdoor furniture and fabric barriers

Signs – Blue Marble, Downtown Bank of America Building, Prep Cosmetics, Amherst Cinema Building sign plan, Mr. Chicken, Arigato Restaurant, Adventure In/Adventure Out, Mango Mango, Bruegger’s Bagel Bakery, Unitarian Universalist Society, Survival Center.

The Board’s strong recommendations regarding an initial sign proposal by the Bank of America resulted in an improved proposal for signs at this central and highly visible location in downtown Amherst.

Respectfully submitted,

Janet Winston
Design Review Board